

THE ODD HOUR EFFORT



ABHIK

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © Abhik 2022

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review. For more information,
e-mail address: abhikgulati1@gmail.com

First paperback edition March 2022

Book designed and illustrated by Abhik

Imprint: Independently published

Contents

PROLOGUE

A Special Somethingix

Page 1

The Infamous Infirmary1

Page 2

Caution In A Bottle11

Page 3

One Act At Night-I21

Page 4

One Act At Night-II33

Page 5

Communication Without Affliction45

Epilogue

Moving on55

Afterword59

Other works and contact61

PROLOGUE

A SPECIAL SOMETHING

Downtown Subway, 03:00 AM

Dalton was my best friend. I have seen him go through a lot. My words alone wouldn't be enough to describe what he had been going through. He did recognize the troubles he was enduring weren't the result of his own success or failure, but the world that had moved along. He had desires like many of us, but nothing, nothing is predictable in this life of ours.

Time moved along, he couldn't.

I, on the other hand, come to this subway every night, waiting for the train back home to arrive. My circadian rhythm isn't something I am proud of, but I am adapted to it. Even though they have told me that I was born on a Sunday evening, sometimes I wonder if the hospital staff was confused and it was actually a Thursday.

I am a Thursday's child, having far to go. Speaking of a child,

here comes one...

"Excuse me!"

"Kid, what are you doing here at this hour!"

"I am hungry!"

"Where are your parents? You shouldn't wander here alone at night!"

"I am waiting for the train. My parents live on the other side."

The kid sure sounded excited for someone wandering on a subway at that hour. Looking at him, he might have been around eleven or twelve. He didn't seem to be in any kind of trouble and was walking carefree on the platform. Looking around, I couldn't spot anyone. It was just me and that kid there. At least one of us was having a good time.

"Listen kid, go play somewhere else. I am in no mood for a chit-chat."

"But I am hungry!"

The kid had the enthusiasm. I could have learned a thing or two about that from him. Still, being his age helped with that attitude.

As a kid, the lush green fields behind my school, were like a second home to me. The youth faded away in nothingness, and with it took the long summer days and the warm breeze of comfort. The only thing left behind was a trail of unfinished thoughts.

The old lost melody hadn't returned, yet I wait for it every night in this subway. Just don't ask me how or why I do it!

Now-a-days, this is my second home.

After further negotiation, I decided to help the kid out. He handed me two bucks and pointed to the vending machine situated in the dark corner of the platform. He was afraid to go there by himself, and so I went there and fetched him a snack.

"Thank you!" The kid was overjoyed on receiving his snack. "There you go." I handed the two bucks back to him. He gave me a smile and went ahead to sit on a bench. I watched him while he enjoyed his late night meal.

I went over and sat on the bench next to that kid. Some peace of mind for me as the night grew darker, with no sign of my transportation home.

Dalton always had his own visions of this world. For him life was like a shadow-checkered illusion, using our best guesses and past experiences to solve or just to fill in the gaps of this life. Our perceptions are imperfect; he always told me that. Realism can only be achieved in indirect ways and with open eyes, he stood by those words.

I did meet him a week before his car wreck. Sadly, he wasn't smiling either. I hoped all that was just a big illusion too, but that time it was far from it.

That was his answer to this life. I am still searching for mine. Dalton, maybe you are alive when we meet again, and the time shall be re-written on our own terms. Until then I'll

be filling the silent void of your absence with my own 'illusions'...

My mind had been diverting to those thoughts a little too much lately. Some called it maladaptive daydreaming; I called it a wish, a wish of my existence through fragments of my imagination.

The kid was sitting on the bench next to me, staring at the empty tracks. We both were waiting for a journey to begin or one to end only the time could've told. The night was still at its prime. I took out a notebook and a pen from my bag, and started putting my imagination into words. The kid turned around, looked at me for a brief moment and went back to his aimless staring.

Something in the air told me that this night isn't going down in history.

*Living was his only
answer.*

*Now it is my only
question!*

Page I

THE INFAMOUS INFIRMARY

Downtown Subway, 03:10 AM

Filling in the gaps, that's what these thoughts do for me. It's a dangerous technique. I know Dalton wouldn't ever approve of it either, but hiding from my fate and going into a strange labyrinth where my different faces turn to me for the truth. I have no answers. Walk away!

The kid seems relaxed, and detached from reality. I can feel the soft blow of the wind on my cold hands. This night may never come again...

Transcript #1 (16th Feb, 03:11 AM)

[Breathing]

Man: Somehow I felt this was the day, but my surroundings were telling a whole lot different story. Betting on the horse with the most favourable odds of winning, only to find out the race finished in a dead heat. That is my luck.

[People chattering in the background]

Man: I can hear them. They can't hear me. A man dressed in a white coat comes inside the room.

Visitor: Hello! I hope everything is alright. Don't worry, we have taken care of everything.

[Laughing]

Man: He looked at me with a cold stare and a smirk on his dead face.

Visitor: You'll be out of here soon!

Man: I didn't know where I was or how I got there. The doctor stood there staring at me. There was no telling whether it was a nightmare or a bad choice I made the previous night.

[Footsteps approaching]

Doctor: The subject has shown no signs of psychosis. We

should continue as soon as possible. Seems like the drug is working as intended.

[Pair of footsteps leaving]

Man: They had sequestered me in this room like I was their most valuable asset. It might have been minutes or hours. I couldn't distinguish.

Transcript#2 (16th Feb, 03:16 AM)

Man: The drive to town took longer than expected. I had conducted a lot of research on the new drug that we were developing for the past few years. Seven others like me had been called for the final inspection in an isolated facility. I didn't know anyone of them, nor did I have the curiosity.

[Sound of a car honking from behind]

Man: The contract terms were as simple as they could have been: Do the work, get the pay, return the hell back. I wasn't planning on staying in that dead town either.

[The car behind collided with the one in front]

[Sound of screeching tires]

Man: Two wide open lanes, looked like somebody didn't want me to reach my destination.

The perpetrator had escaped, leaving me alone on that deserted road. I felt like the horse who had been hobbled just before the home stretch of a derby. Not a pretty picture.

Transcript# 3 (16th Feb, 03:20 AM)

[Sound of car engine starting]

Man: The evening had taken a test of my patience. If that was someone's twisted idea of fun, I wasn't playing along. Every turn on the road showered me with more false hope. I had been confined to that denuded town, nowhere left to hide.

Mechanic: That's some serious damage you got here — mind if I take a closer look — hehe!

Man: The meeting got off-schedule. The drowning sun wasn't the guiding sign I was anticipating. With every second that ticked on the clock, I got farther away from my destination.

[Loud sound of repairs in the background]

Mechanic: Hehe! — I got it fixed — just like new — hehe!

[Car engine starts]

Man: The future had become the past. The devil was then sitting next to me in the passenger seat, or maybe he had been there from the beginning.

Transcript#4 (16th Feb, 03:25 AM)

Man: The destination was closing in. I could feel it. There was no turning back. My intentions were clear. The road ahead was not.

Devil: The drug! The drug!

Man: I had been on that road before. I knew the entire way till the end. There was no hurry.

Devil: The drug! It doesn't work!

[Car speeds up]

Man: I had sacrificed my life all my living years. Everything had led up to that moment.

[The car loses control and rolls over]

[Heavy breathing]

They knew I was coming. They didn't want me there. The devil had handed me his list of troubles. It was the end of the line for the vehicle. I continued to walk forward on the dark road.

[Painful scream]

Transcript#5 (16th Feb, 03:31 AM)

Man: I spotted my destination, the infirmary. It was just as they had mentioned, like a secret hiding place, far from the eyes of the world. They asked me to come inside. Treated me like I was a celebrity.

Woman: Welcome, I hope your journey was soothing. They have been waiting for you.
Doctor! He is here!

[Giggle]

We are lucky to have you here!

[Giggle]

[Pair of footsteps of approaching]

Man: There were two of them, both dressed in white coats. They broke to me the news that I didn't go there for.

Doctor: Sorry, but the drug has failed all the inspections. We cannot continue any further. It is rejected!

Man: The devil had told me that before. He stood behind me, mocking.

Other doctor: There is something else, I hope you'll like to see.

Man: The woman took me inside a room. She poured me a drink.

Woman: There you go honey!

[Low chuckle]

Man: Something started to choke me. They took me for a fool. They had used my own drug against me. I was dreaming once again.

[Panic scream]

Doctor: Lock him up!

Transcript#6 (16th Feb, 3:38 AM)

Doctor: He's stable now, we shall continue.

[Footsteps approaching]

[Breathing]

Man: I was barely awake, but I could hear them clearly. I could feel them coming towards me once again. The color of their coats had changed to bright red.

Doctor: You are stronger than the others. Easy now, one last dose and you'll be gone for good.

Man: Somehow I knew he was holding the syringe in his right hand. I grabbed it and stabbed him in the neck.

Other doctor: Listen! Listen, please! It was his idea. I am no part of this experiment! [Yelling]

Man: He charged at me with another needle. I was prepared. He watched as I stabbed him in the left eye with his own weapon. They were both dead.

Woman: Wait! You can't leave like this! No! Please! Don't do this! Help! Ahh!

Man: My feet followed the blood trail that I had constructed. The surroundings were getting blurry. The future looked bright.

Transcript#7 (16th Feb, 03:42 AM)

Man: Tracing back to where I left my car, only to find out that it was stolen. Somebody didn't want the game to end.

[Car honking in the background]

Man: My car drove past me. I was the one driving. My hands were clean.

Devil: The drug! The drug! It works!

[Laughing]

Man: I have been conducting a lot of research on the new drug that we are developing for the past few years now. Eight others like me have been called for the final inspection in an isolated facility. I don't know anyone of them, nor do I have the curiosity.

[Laughing]

Man: The drug, it works!

[Screaming]

Page 2

CAUTION IN A BOTTLE

Downtown Subway, 03:43 AM

“What are you writing about?”

The kid stood in front of me.

“Huh! It’s nothing kid, you wouldn’t understand.”

“Maybe I could.”

A train passed the station platform. The kid went back to the bench he was sitting on. I put my notebook down and went towards the vending machine to fetch myself something to drink.

Dalton always said to me that I was a shy and reserved person. Even though he had known me since childhood, he told me that he knew a very little about me.

I don’t consider myself that way.

The Odd Hour Effort

*Maybe I was hiding something, I shouldn't. Maybe I couldn't
understand what he meant by those words.*

Maybe I am living in an altered state of consciousness.

I returned to my bench and picked up my notebook once
again.

Transcript#1 (16th Feb, 03:45 AM)

Boy: It has been a long time since I got his last message. Today is the last day I will be here.

[Sound of water splashing against the shore]

I've read them all, each one of them, a hundred or perhaps a thousand times. He wanted to escape, maybe he did manage to do that.

Old woman: Young man, it's time to leave.

Boy: I didn't want to turn around. I could feel it, something was wrong. Maybe I was the reason behind it all.

[Car door opens]

Old woman: Come on junior!

[Sobbing]

Boy: I finally turned around and went back to the place, I didn't want to go. I walked inside the darkness, wishing it was all a lie.

Transcript#2 (16th Feb 03:48 AM)

Boy: I was allowed to go out and play with the others. Sadly, they all walked away.

[Door closes]

Boy: They had brought me there. I wanted to escape, but they wouldn't let me.

[Door opens]

[Sound of water splashing]

Boy: I had to agree to their every command. I was running from my own shadow for my own sake.

[Door closes]

Boy: There were many things I would like to believe, but I wasn't a child any more. I continued to stay there, having fun.

[Door opens]

I wanted to get out.

Transcript#3 (16th Feb 03:52 AM)

[Television blaring in the background]

Boy: I felt lost in that place. I was surrounded by many [pause] but none at the same time.

[Door opens]

Old woman: Here's your meal! Enjoy!

Boy: I could see something in the water outside. Like one of the myriad pieces to my broken life had finally been discovered. It was an old stubby bottle. That was the day I got his first letter.

[Door closes]

[Reads the letter]

'It was my birthday today. Mother held a party, nobody showed up! She baked me a chocolate cake as well. Sister and I enjoyed it.'

Boy: I could feel him beside me, writing those words. I kept the letter safe with me. Like an explorer starting out on his voyage, I had something to look forward to.

Transcript#4 (16th Feb, 03:55 AM)

[Sound of water splashing]

Boy: I waited patiently. It would arrive, I could feel it coming my way.

[Door opens]

Old Woman: Why haven't you eaten anything? Why do you keep looking outside?

Boy: They wish they could stop that too, but they couldn't. The calendar had lost another page before the next message arrived.

[Door closes]

[Reads the letter]

*'I failed my English test last week. Mother was upset. Father caught a cold. Sister got a new dog.
I am afraid of something, but I don't know what it is.'*

Boy: The shadows were growing bigger. I would hide under them and read that letter again and again. There was nothing more I could've done.

Transcript#5 (16th Feb, 03:58 AM)

Boy: I was walking alone, watching the sun go down over the horizon. The water remained calm. Another month passed, but nothing washed ashore.

[Door opens]

Old woman: Please come inside.

[Telephone rings]

Old woman: Yes, [pause] he's doing good. [Long pause] I don't know about that. No, [low voice] there is not much time left!

[Old woman hangs up]

[Water splashing against the rocks]

Boy: Another summer day of my youth was blown away by the wind. The cold winter was approaching me.

Transcript#6 (16th Feb, 03:59 AM)

Boy: Another year was over. There was no hope for its arrival. Everything was a lie.

[Door opens]

Old woman: Junior, would you like to go outside today?

Boy: There was no escaping the void it had left in my soul. I would go outside just to see the cold rain falling.

[Old woman talking in the background]

[Door closes]

Boy: I was ready to give up and go my own way. The birds sang me a peaceful lullaby, and with it arrived, the last ever message I got from him.

[Reads letter]

'Nothing is alright. Sister's dog died last month. She had been crying every night since then.

Father said that I need to go somewhere far away from them.

Mother told me that she would visit me there. She even packed me some chocolate cake.

I just want to run again and escape everything...'

Boy: I wanted to run along with him, but the darkness held me captive.

Transcript#7 (16th Feb, 04:02 AM)

Boy: Time was slowing down. What felt like an eternity was only a few months wasted lying in my bed.

[Door opens]

Old woman: How was the night? We need to leave now.

Boy: Finally I was free to walk out of that place.

[Sound of water splashing against the shore]

Today is the last day I will be here. It's been a long time since I got his last message.

[Car door opens]

Old woman: Come on junior!

Boy: I went to a place I didn't want to go.

[Sobbing]

[They both got off the car]

Boy: There was no one around. Mama-Papa didn't come to take me back home. I was alone and lost once again.

[Car door opens. The old woman steps inside]

Old woman: What's this?

[Spots a note on the backseat, unfolds and reads the note]

'Take care of yourself, little sister!'

Page 3

ONE ACT AT NIGHT-I

Downtown Subway, 04:05 AM

It had been an hour since I got there. I awaited my transportation. The kid continued to stare at the empty tracks.

Lately, I've been stepping on all kinds of crazy stones. I never worry about what's to come next. Perhaps it will be twice as bad as the stone I just stepped-off.

The answers in my head never provide the closure I had been searching for.

Dalton had his own way of dealing with the times he felt under pressure by his own existence. He would leave everything and just go in solitude, being on his own, living in the moment and learning from it.

Sometimes, he would get angry and blame himself for not understanding how the Roman numerals worked. Sometimes,

he would just sit down and talk about complex scientific theories. I would just listen, even though I never understood a word.

After a few minutes, a train stopped at the platform. Unfortunately, that wasn't my ride. I saw the kid waving me a goodbye as he got on the train. The train left. I picked up my pen once again.

Transcript#1 (16th Feb, 04:09 AM)

Man: It was three in the night, snow heavily covering up everything on the two-way street where I stood. Nothing seemed obvious, but the whole world knew of it.

[Car honking in the distance]

Man: Not even a single soul could be detected during that time on that chilly street. I was looking up, not sure where, but I kept looking. The tall buildings with tinted windows gave me the impression of a starry night. Everything but nothing mattered to me.

[Breathing]

Man: Hopes, false aspirations of the organic matter were all laid down at that time of the night. No work, no play, only me.

Transcript#2 (16th Feb, 04:12 AM)

Man: I was miles away from my home. Out on a business, much of my time had been wasted on turning away from things which truly mattered.

[Strong wind blowing]

Man: The night kept getting darker. I had a plan to cope with that snowy night. Thinking about the good times, when suddenly a woman came walking towards me. Her face gave me a scary look. I had to admit that I was no conqueror of the night. She kept looking and then ran away. Something was fishy, but I carried on my way.

[Dogs howling in the background]

Man: Later that night, while crossing the railroads, a van drove past me.

[Vehicle speeding away]

Speed was certainly above one hundred. It was no big deal since it didn't hit me. A shady feeling arose in my mind. Something wasn't right. Not even a second had elapsed, when I noticed a crumpled piece of paper lying on the ground before me.

[Picks up the crumpled paper]

The writing on the paper mentioned something like a code.

Somehow, I wasn't surprised. It was simple and easier to solve than to explain.

Transcript#3 (16th Feb, 04:15 AM)

Man: The words on the paper pointed to an address, a wealthy gentleman's office whom I had met before.

[Train horn blaring in the background]

At first, I wanted to go to the gentleman's house and ask him if he knew about that piece of paper; but the office was fairly close, and the watch showed fifteen past three. So, I decided to take a walk to the address mentioned.

[Cold breeze blowing]

Man: No human soul wandered on the street during that time of the night. It took me ten minutes to reach there. The van from before was there too. That made complete sense. A silhouette appeared at the fifth floor window. I decided to go inside the building to check on a few things. As soon as I stepped inside the building, a stranger was waiting for me in the hallway.

[Footsteps approaching]

Man: As it came closer, I felt more excited. Excitement was at the tip of my tongue when suddenly a cat walked towards me. The paws were drenched in black ink.

[Cat howling]

The cat ran away and I was alone once again. The exact same thing kept repeating at each floor. Once at the stairway

leading up to the fifth floor, the sound of footsteps grew louder. It surely wasn't any domesticated feline that time around.

Transcript#4 (16th Feb, 04:18 AM)

Man: My pupils were dilated to an extent that I could see all the way through the hallway of the fifth floor. For once I thought that it took me longer to get up to that floor than it took me to reach the other ones. A large shadow managed to fool my eyes. I ran towards it. [pause] It had disappeared, managing to fool me again.

Without further ado, I went inside the room I saw the silhouette in.

[Sound of the door swinging open]

Man: I was the only one there. Since it was the only tall building in that area and the glass windows were few, no old school reflection trick could have worked. I felt like being trapped in some kind of twisted situation.

[Cold wind blowing]

Man: I got out of the building and was on my way to gather some answers. My curious mind didn't want to sleep before knowing the truth behind it all.

Transcript#5 (16th Feb, 04:21 AM)

Man: They had turned me into something which I didn't want to be. My mind was playing games with me. The whole night went by in search of answers, but lady luck wasn't on my side.

[Car honking in the background]

With a few hours left for daybreak, I decided to pay my greetings to the gentleman himself at his home address. I always wondered what it was like to live in a house that large in size. Indeed, how much space did the man need.

[Sighing]

[Doorbell ringing]

Man: I gave the front doorbell a few hard blows before an old lady decided to answer. I provided her with all the details required and my familiarity with the gentleman living there.

[Evil laughter]

I wasn't playing the role of a jester. With a grin on her face, she invited me inside the house. Declining her offer, I skipped to the primal talk. I asked to see the gentleman. Her answer made my heart skip a beat — I wasn't prepared for that.

The gentleman had died five years ago!

Transcript#6 (16th Feb, 04:25 AM)

Man: My mind shattered into a thousand pieces. The truth seemed to lose all its meaning. I was sure that I had met with that gentleman just the previous day. Was I becoming a victim of my own imagination?

[Strong cold wind blowing]

The cold air started to feel funny. The lady was old enough to have come up with any bogus stories of her own. I left that place without saying my goodbyes.

[Sound of door opening]

Man: Avoiding daylight, I hid in my office. Collecting my thoughts, when the orange hue of the setting sun woke me up. The tall buildings around me reflected that orange tinted sky, making a pretty skyline.

[Sound of door closing]

Man: I wanted to run but my legs felt heavy, sure my age was catching up to me. I called for a cab and fortunately got one with ease.

The world seemed to get more complicated each day. Like ants swarming all over a picnic table, I was surrounded by unanswered mysteries. Was it all man-made?

[Screech of wheels]

Cabby: That will be five!

Man: I was so busy trying to answer the unknown that I couldn't even hold a conversation with myself.

I started to wander where my mind took me. Nothing was exciting about that night, just the same old cigarette and a snowfall. The darkness around reminded me of my empty life.

[Oncoming car honking]

Man: That flash from the vehicle should've blinded me, but instead it paved a way forward. Two simpletons, laughing their heads off caught my attention.

First simpleton: [Giggle] Take a look at this news here!

[Giggle]

Second simpleton: [Reading aloud] The property of some wealthy gentleman was given away to the charity, since there wasn't an heir in succession. It took the authorities three years to decide that!

First simpleton: Wish I could be an heir someday!

[Laughing]

[Snatching away the newspaper]

Man: The words wealthy gentleman, three years sounded familiar. Much familiar indeed.

Transcript#7 (16th Feb, 04:28 AM)

Man: Things hadn't calmed down. The cold winds started to do their magic. My aimless walk wasn't recognized by many in those calm streets of hell.

[A female voice accompanied by a symphony, playing in the background]

I knew that sound. I tried to touch it, but every time I took a step forward, it got farther away from me.

[Singing voice]

It was trying to guide me.

The melody led me to a nearby bar. Forgetting my worries, I went inside it.

[Sound of a wine glass falling from a table]

Stranger: Easy now! Just do as I say!

Man: I could feel the gun barrel pressing against my back. Someone was twisting my arm. It wasn't exactly the warm welcome I was hoping for.

Page 4

ONE ACT AT NIGHT-II

Downtown Subway, 04:32 AM

The ringing of my phone interrupted me. I thought about just letting it ring. Finally, I picked it up against my will.

“Okay, Alright — I’ll be back soon. Yes, still at the subway — alright, bye.”

It was my next door neighbour. He was probably worried about me since there was a robbery reported in our neighborhood in the recent past. A woman was stabbed and everything she owned was taken. The real motives remained uninformed.

Soon after, I heard the sound of a train coming closer. After a long wait, my ride was finally there. I left the dark and

lonely platform behind and got on it, seated myself and was surrounded by two others like me. They had their own priorities. None of us made any eye contact.

On the train, 04:36 AM

Dalton had an unmatched talent for the 8 ball pool. Two months ago, he invited me to the pool room for some rounds. I held my ground until he started taking the games seriously.

There was no turning back for him. Needless to say, I lost every single one of those rounds. The whole night felt like it went away in a flash. Sadly, I cannot get that chance again.

Maybe, the answer to my existence was that pool game, or maybe it is just to live in peace.

Living was his only answer. Now it is my only question!

There was still some time left before I reached my destination. Clearing my mind, I started to put my imagination on to the paper once again.

Transcript#1 (16th Feb, 04:38 AM)

[Clicking of revolver]

Man: I didn't go there to play any games. I wasn't ready to give up either.

[Evil laugh]

Stranger: Now, follow me like a good boy and there won't be any problems.

Man: I wasn't taking instructions from some lowlife that night. I broke the grip and took control of the weapon.

Stranger: Surprised to see me!

[Laughing]

Man: The face was familiar. He was the man I had been searching for in the shadows of the street.

Gentleman: I knew it was you. Nobody else in their right mind, would have attempted that. Don't worry. You are as dead to this damn town as I am. Let's, take a seat.

[Female singing in the background]

Man: The gentleman had a smirk on his face. I got confused by the picture he was trying to paint in my mind.

Gentleman: Now just remember, you are dead! I am dead! It all happened five years ago.

[Laughing]

Man: The night got more complex. I was desperate to get the answers.

Transcript#2 (16th Feb, 04:43 AM)

[Coughing]

Gentleman: I see you can't remember. Ignorance is bliss, but not for long, my friend, somebody knows about us. The past is no longer hidden. They are after us! They seek revenge!

[Music playing in the background]

Gentleman: Meet me here in an hour. You'll know everything you need to know. Don't be late.

[Evil laugh]

Man: He left a note mentioning an address to a foundry on the opposite side of town. I felt trapped inside my body. The singer kept glancing at me from a distance. I recognized the scary look in her eyes. I left the place, waiting for the night to unfold.

Transcript#3 (16th Feb, 04:45 AM)

Man: I couldn't remember the last time I felt that excited for a night walk across town. The fog-covered alleys made it difficult to see the way ahead.

[Cars honking in the background]

Man: Somebody was walking behind me. I could feel it. The only thing I could trust were my footsteps. I tried to run, and the figure followed. The roads seemed to be never-ending.

[Heavy breathing]

Man: Running wasn't getting me anywhere. I turned around to face my stalker, only to be greeted by the empty roads behind me.

I made my way to the foundry. I wasn't feeling invited.

Transcript#4 (16th Feb, 04:48 AM)

[Cold wind blowing]

Gentleman: Ha! Ha! So you made it here.

[Laughing]

Get him!

[Gunshot]

[Screaming]

Man: The bastard got the taste of his own medicine. The snitch was dead. I didn't wait there to pay my respects. I tried to escape, but they had me cornered.

[Looks behind]

[Gunshot]

A shot to my right leg, I couldn't move any further. They dragged me inside the factory. I was prepared to meet the faker.

[Machine operating sounds in the background]

Transcript#5 (16th Feb, 04:51 AM)

Man: It was baking hot inside. Dust filled the air. Someone was waiting for me in the dark.

Woman: I hope you missed me.

Man: The woman carried a scary look on her face. She was the singer from before.

Woman: Five years; I had to remain behind the bars. You two thought you could just abandon me and walk away! Honey, it's payback time! Tell me where the goods are and I might let you live.

Man: She commanded her thugs to get the answers out of me. They didn't leave any tactic in the book behind in order to obtain something which I didn't know.

Woman: Kill him if he refuses!

[He pushes one of the thugs into the liquid metal mold]

First thug: My face! My face! Ahh!

Man: Poor bastard's face disappeared into dust. Their plans had failed.

Second thug: Spare me! Please! No!

[He throws the other thug inside the ignited furnace]

One Act At Night-II

Woman: No, this can't be happening! I am going to kill you! I am going to get my revenge!

[Laughing]

Man: Her death was inevitable. I wrote her fate.

[He pours liquid bronze over her]

Man: She got her heat treatment. I took a final look at the mess I had created and escaped. Nothing stood in my way.

[Lights go out]

Transcript#6 (16th Feb, 04:55 AM)

Man: The whole place was drowning in chaos followed by sweet silence. I made my way back towards my office, leaving no clues behind. Everything was over.

[Wind blowing]

[Door opens]

Man: A stranger was sitting in the chair behind the desk. He was awaiting my arrival.

Stranger: Is it over?

Man: Yes, the job was completed successfully.

Stranger: Thank you for your assistance. [pause] Here's the payment! You should now leave!

Man: I finally met with the faker. I walked outside the stranger's office.

[Door closes]

Man: Maybe I was the real pretender with a fresh disguise and a name.

I awaited a new task from some other prosperous bastard. I walked to a familiar place.

Another imperfect night greeted me.

[Car honking in the background]

One Act At Night-II

Man: It was three in the night, snow heavily covering up everything on the two-way street where I stood. Nothing seemed obvious, but the whole world knew of it.

Page 5

COMMUNICATION WITHOUT AFFLICTION

On the train, 04:59 AM

My legs were tired due to being seated for an extended time. The train halted for a minute and one of the passengers got out to their destination. I was still waiting for mine. The other person sitting opposite to me had his eyes closed. He was living in his own reality. The moonlight was my only supporter.

Somebody once mentioned the idea of being famous in front of me. Dalton, happened to be there, too. He might have laughed for a good minute when he heard the words coming out of that man's mouth. He never criticized him, but the

idea of being well-known wasn't the thing he ever thought of achieving.

I did ask Dalton why he didn't want to be famous or well-known, to which he simply replied, I already am. It was hard to understand the things he said sometimes.

I cracked my knuckles and once again went inside my head.

Transcript#1 (16th Feb, 05:05 AM)

[Flipping the switches]

[Slow music starts to play]

Man: Alright, there I was. Another day, another evening.

[Closes the window]

Man: The temperature is just above eighty, I think survival is possible. Check, everything is ready. Time for some action!

[Gulps beer in the can]

Man: Consort with nature, don't consort with me. I am done! Done! It's a fucking revolution!

[Laughing and shouting]

Man: I am excited. I can feel it! Even my bones and soul are jitterbugging.

[Excited scream]

[He turns on the voice disguise]

Man: The fine-tuned piece of equipment is now under my command. Let's get it started!

[He goes on air]

Transcript#2 (16th Feb, 05:08 AM)

[He speaks in a low pitched voice into the microphone]

Man: Folks, yesterday I was trapped inside my mind for exactly three hours, couldn't even think straight. A mystical sad train of passing thoughts. It was a horrible place, some of you may have been there [long pause] no, no don't call a doctor. I am okay!

Hey, that's enough about me! Speaking of doctors, did you folks read the headline in today's newspaper? 'A doctor trying to make a legendary drug, claims that it works and will be beneficial for the mankind'.

[Laughing]

As if! Well, I shouldn't criticize it since it isn't covered under my lexicon. It's just too hard to grasp for an individual like myself!

Now, I hope everyone's doing well. If not, you will. I have these lovely desserts lying in my refrigerator for you all. You just need to wait for them to be served.

[He pops open another beer can]

Man: Yesterday, I did get an unusual letter in my mailbox, from some boy living on the west side. Let me find it; I'll read it to you.

Damn! There are lot of these!

[Music playing in the background]

Wait, here it is!

[Picks up the letter]

Transcript#3 (16th Feb, 05:12 AM)

Man: First of all, it is heartwarming to hear that this young boy has been listening to me for a while now.

Now, this letter is self-explanatory folks. The boy writes, saying, how he's been waiting for a letter from his pal living far away to arrive, but it doesn't seem to come through.

[Pause]

[Gets closer to microphone]

Man: Well, friend, if you are listening right now, I will say this, all of us, including me, are waiting for a letter from someone. But here's the crazy secret, [chuckles] it will never come to anyone.

[Gets away from microphone]

Man: With that out of the way, let's feed our hungry minds with some knowledge of human evolution and revolution! Let's not waste our imagination. I don't want the whole evening to be about pain and sorrow, who knows, it might be the last one we witness!

As Paul Bowles' in his book "The Sheltering Sky" wrote: 'we get to think of life as an inexhaustible well. And everything happens only a certain number of times, and a very small number really.' So let's take our next step with a little extra caution.

[Music plays in the background]

Man: Wait, [turns the volume down] my phone is ringing.
Folks, I think we got some company today.

[Takes a sip out of the beer can]

[Picks up the call]

Transcript#4 (16th Feb, 05:15 AM)

Man: Yes, who is this?

Caller: ...

Man: Hey, you still there?

Caller: ...[breathing]

Man: Sorry buddy. I need to hear some words. I can't read your mind while sitting here!

Caller: ... I [pauses] I ain't happy...

Man: Alright, Mr. ...

Caller: Dalton!

Man: Dalton buddy, who sold you that idea? Some bastard off the street?

Dalton: You won't understand!

Man: Did you really call here thinking I would? It's hard to see things from your eye's, I can't do that pal. Two choices, detach or protest...

[Dalton hangs up]

Man: Hello...! I think he hung up. Well, folks, if you lost

your key to easy street somewhere, I got bad news, I don't have it lying around here.

Dalton, if you are still listening, look, there is a way, but it's not easy. We need to walk on it together and then maybe, just maybe, we can understand each other.

That's what I stand for. I hope you all better start standing for something rather than falling for everything.

This will do it for today!

[Turns of the microphone]

[Slow music plays in the background]

Transcript#5 (16th Feb, 05:19 AM)

Man: Same old day, same old me! Sometimes I wonder, why am I even here?

[Gulps down the beer]

Well, I ain't chasing anything. Nothing is left to be said.

[He gets up and goes outside]

Man: The sun is gone. I hope it rises again tomorrow.

[Climbs down the stairs]

Man: I better reach the subway before I miss my train!

[Running]

[Bumps into a stranger]

Man: That's my fault!

Stranger: I think we understand each other.

[Both smile and go in opposite directions]

[He laughs all the way to the subway]

Epilogue

MOVING ON

On the train, 05:25AM

I closed my eyes for a few moments only to wake up to the skies changing color. The man seated opposite to me was still in his dreamland. I placed my notebook in my bag and waited for my destination, which was not far away at that moment.

The train finally reached my destination. I got-off, leaving the man sleeping alone for rest of his journey. Perhaps, I could meet him again on another lively day.

On the way home, 05:30 AM

My day was finally coming to an end. I walked to the

neighborhood where I lived. I felt the weight of my feet as I climbed the stairs to my home.

Inside the apartment, 05:40 AM

I placed my heavy bag down on the table. Reminiscing about the events of that day, the house felt empty for no reason.

I might have forgotten some lines that I wanted to imagine. The less always felt more to me. The pen had no ink left.

Taking a good look at the clock, I made my way to bed. The scars on my body might change with the seasons, but I would remain awake. If I wanted to do it better, I might repeat it all over again.

AFTERWORD

Thanks to anyone who read this short work.

The Odd Hour Effort (Working title: A Night Under Moonlight) was a collection of pages I wrote years ago during my early days at the university. One of them I wrote during an eight-hour long bus trip to my home.

Time went by and I forgot about these transcripts. Getting back into writing helped me pick them up again and complete them.

Even though it's not much to offer in a book, I hope this work could spark the interest of someone reading it and that in turn would bring me joy.

The cover art was inspired by a state of mind of finding happiness and satisfaction in times of sorrow.

Also, I would like to continue this book as a series and start to explore more of the psychological/mystery genre.

Once again, thank you for your support and your feedback will be appreciated.

OTHER WORKS AND CONTACT

Other Works:

Ratchet Street

Moving to a new place is both exciting and challenging, but only if it's not Ratchet Street, a place where people live ordinary lives, and nothing excites them anymore. The time kept turning, but nothing was changing!

While trying to bring a change in their own life, a father-son duo decides to move to an apartment building situated there, leading to a good and standard life just like any other tenant living at that place.

Comes along a silent night. The dark clouds covering the night sky and changing the lives of the residents in a way they didn't ask for! A sudden disappearance of a teenage girl, causing ruckus in the sweet ignorant lives of the tenants in the apartment building and a trail leading to uncover the truth buried in the cold past.

There are questions, but who is telling the truth? Does someone have more than one secret to tell?

Unusual encounters, a forgotten memory, a troubled past, a broken relation, some purposeless arguments, a life of loneliness followed by exchange of wits and a cold wind.

A street full of secrets and wise, wouldn't you like to visit there once?

Purchase link: http://mybook.to/Ratchet_Street

Find Fifty: Cradle Destinies

DON'T ASK WHY?

Figuring out life in a big city could be hard and tiresome at the same time. After realizing this fact, Shaun Kent, a nineteen-year-old surviving on his own, couldn't feel the need to push any further.

One day, while walking around in the neighborhood on his day-off, Shaun locates a newly furnished house. Owing to his curious nature, he decides to explore more of the inside. An unknown voice guides him in, but little did he know that everything isn't as it seems.

Every *floor* in the house holds an *extraordinary adventure* accompanied by some uncanny folks. The problem, 'there is no turning back!'

Following the words of the unknown voice, Shaun embarks on a 'psychological hunt' between his inner and outer realities.

Will he be able to escape or fall victim to his own actions?

Take a deep dive into the wild trip and let the adventure unfold! And don't forget to look in the mirror...

Purchase link: <http://mybook.to/FindFifty>

DISCONNECTED

Jason, a used to be basketball prodigy, lives with Ben, a used to be musical genius, and a slacker Tim. Trying to build up a reputation in university, both Jason and Ben, went to extreme ends of partying and lost focus of their lives. While their roommate Tim tried to warn them of the dangers, nothing stopped them until they were on the verge of being expelled from the university. One night Jason and Ben, both heavily drunk and celebrating their last days there, got an idea to relive their old memories of when they first came to that university. Still intoxicated, they started prank calling late night businesses. When they decided to give up on their act, Jason suggested one more call wouldn't hurt. They ended up calling a networking business ran by an old man claiming to have solutions to all of their problems at *'the right price'*.

Following the man's advice things start to go right and beyond comfortable. But what is the actual price both of them have to pay?

Purchase link: http://mybook.to/Disconnected_Novel

Note: All titles are also available in digital paperback format on **Google Play Books**.

CONTACT:

Email: **abhikgulati1@gmail.com** (for any personal feedback or inquires)

Blog: **<https://findfifty.wordpress.com/>** (Check for upcoming releases and for connecting with other folks)

Goodreads: **https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/22021072.Abhik_Gulati**

**LIVING WAS HIS ONLY
ANSWER.**

**NOW IT IS MY ONLY
QUESTION!**

A SMALL COLLECTION OF STORIES WRITTEN BY A TRAVELER SITTING ON A COLD BENCH AT A LONELY PLATFORM, WAITING FOR THE ARRIVAL OF HIS TRAIN HOME. HE HAS SOMETHING TO TELL YOU IF YOU ARE READY TO LISTEN.

DEPICTED IN TRANSCRIPT STYLE, FOLLOW WHAT GOES THROUGH THE MIND OF OUR TEMPORARY VISITOR, AS HE TRIES TO PROCESS HIS EXISTENCE IN THIS ORDINARY WORLD ON A COLD EMPTY NIGHT.

IF THE TIME AND PLACE IS RIGHT, YOU MAY SEE HIM SITTING THERE WORKING ON HIS NEXT MYSTERY, THRILLER OR SCI-FI SERIES. MAYBE HE'S THINKING ABOUT **HIS FRIEND**, LIVING FAR AWAY OR SOME OTHER TRIVIAL ISSUE. WHATEVER THE CASE, LET HIM KNOW **YOU** ARE THERE.